

I wish to register my concern over Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to force their stations to air what by all accounts is a one-sided attack on Senator Kerry, under the guise of a "documentary", only days before the presidential election. I am not a lawyer, but this seems to be a clear violation of any fairness doctrine. Beyond that it is a vivid reminder that freedom of press (or media) is a fiction unless you happen to own a press -- or, as in this case, a sizable segment of the television market.

As you know, Sinclair uses the public airwaves free of charge, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. I fail to see how a one-sided program of this kind -- and I have yet to hear anyone describe this planned broadcast as anything but a smear attack on Kerry -- serves the public interest. The only defense I've heard is from a Republican spokesman who admits the bias of the program but then defends it as a form of free speech. Surely, the FCC knows better. And Sinclair knows better. If it's only an exercise in free speech, then why won't Sinclair air a recent pro-Kerry documentary in the interests of balance and public service?

This is ultimately about the power of big media monopolies to undermine free speech. Isn't the FCC supposed to watch over this? While the FCC sits silently in the face of Sinclair's assault on media fairness, I note that the controversial film, "Farhenheit 911," has now been "banned" by another faction of the media monopoly, which had previously agreed to show the film before the election. Where's the fairness in this? Where's the FCC guarding the public interest, protecting the public airwaves for all of us?

Democracy requires information; it simply won't work without it. Sinclair's actions show why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them. They show why the license renewal process needs real public involvement and input.

I hope the FCC will take a stand for fairness and use whatever pressure is at your disposal to scale back the power of media monopolies like Sinclair, whose decision to air this attack ad reminds me of the kind of "fair and balanced" coverage that we've come to expect from such reputable news organizations as Fox news or, a few years ago, from the Kremlin. America is better than this. Thank you.